



HIGHLIGHTS

NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
United States Department of Agriculture • Washington, D.C. 20250
Ag Statistics Hotline: 1-800-727-9540 • www.usda.gov/nass/



Contact: Marc Tosiano (717) 787-3904
nass-pa@nass.usda.gov

2002 AG CENSUS MEASURES WOMEN FARM OPERATORS IN PENNSYLVANIA

HARRISBURG, PA, March 22, 2005 – Since March is Women’s History Month, this article reviews statistics about women principal farm operators from the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Although many other women are involved in decisions on the farm, the following information concentrates on women who are the primary or principal farm operator.

Pennsylvania ranked in the top 15 states for farms operated by a woman principal operator with 6,079 farms. This is a 21 percent increase over the 5,009 women principal operators from the 1997 Census of Agriculture. Of the 58,105 farms in Pennsylvania 10.5 percent have a woman principal operator. Out of the 67 counties in the State, women principal operators were reported in 66 counties. The top three counties for farms operated by a woman principal operator were Chester County with 441 farms; York County with 378 farms; and Washington County with 344 farms. The three counties with the most acreage operated by women principal operators were Washington County with 23,721 acres; Chester County with 19,940 acres; and Susquehanna County with 17,296 acres.

The 2002 Census of Agriculture indicated a 13.4 percent increase in the number of farms nationwide operated by women since 1997. A total of 237,819 farms in the U.S. were reported as having a woman as the principal operator in 2002. Women operated 59,383,557 acres of land in 2002, an increase of 16.5 percent from 1997. In addition, 84 percent of the women principal operators were full owners of the farms they operated. Nearly all women principal operators in the U.S., 95.4 percent, own at least part of the land they operated. In 2002, 83.4 percent of women principal operators in Pennsylvania were full owners of the farms they operated. These farms totaled 308,340 acres of land. An additional, 11.4 percent of women principal operators owned part of the land they operated.

“The 2002 Census of Agriculture shows the growing interest and participation of women in U.S. agricultural production,” commented Ron Bosecker, Administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). “Census of Agriculture results show the contribution women farmers and ranchers make to the agricultural industry at the national level, the state level, and the county level.”

The 2002 Census provided the first facts on computer and internet use by farmers and ranchers on a county-by-county basis. As a result, the Census revealed that nationwide, women principal operators were more likely to use computers for business and have Internet access than male principal operators. According to the Census, in Pennsylvania 41.7 percent of women-operated farms used computers for business compared to 30.6 percent of male-operated farms. In addition, 56.2 percent of women-operated farms had Internet access, compared to 40.9 percent of male-operated farms.

Data from the Census also revealed some common characteristics of women principal operators throughout the State. Most women principal operators in Pennsylvania had worked 10 years or more on their present farm. In addition, 88.7 percent of the women lived on their farm and 49.9 percent listed farming as their primary occupation. The 2002 Census also indicated that women operators in Pennsylvania are slightly younger than principal operators in general. The average age of a woman principal operator in Pennsylvania is 52.5 years, compared to 53.1 years for all principal operators.

Looking at market value of agricultural products sold by women-operated farms in Pennsylvania, women produced \$94,011,000 in livestock, poultry and their products, and an additional \$40,761,000 in crops. The amount sold by women-operated farms accounts for 3.2 percent of our State's total market value of agricultural products sold. The top three counties for market value of agricultural products sold by women-operated farms were Lancaster County with \$14,891,000 sold; Chester County with \$12,989,000, and Susquehanna County with \$9,346,000.

“Although both men and women have always been involved in agriculture, prior to the late 1970s census statistics were not collected to differentiate male and female farm operators,” said Marc Tosiano, Director of USDA-NASS-Pennsylvania Statistical Office. “The actual number of women operators and the amount of land they operated was first reported in the 1978 Census of Agriculture. We are dedicated to accurately reporting the statistics on women farmers and we are working hard to ensure this growing constituency is counted and recognized for their contribution to agriculture.”

NASS conducts the census of agriculture every five years and it is the only source of consistent, comparable and detailed data for every county in America. NASS also collects and provides a vast array of production, economic, demographic and environmental facts about U. S. agriculture through regularly scheduled weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual survey reports. For more census information, visit NASS online at www.usda.gov/nass/ and click on “Census of Agriculture” for aggregate facts and figures, or call 1-800-727-9540.

Find agricultural statistics for your county, State, and the Nation at www.usda.gov/nass/.